

The background features a collage of various educational and professional icons, including a compass, a clock, a document, a globe, a building, and a laptop. Overlaid on this are faint, semi-transparent letters and numbers, such as 'T', '8', 'J', '9', 'P', 'O', 'J', 'E', 'H', 'M', '4', 'W', 'A', 'S', 'O', 'D', 'V', 'N', 'I', 'Y', 'F', 'R', 'I', 'S', 'D', 'S', 'C', 'P', 'O', 'K', '4', '2', 'I', '5', 'L', 'J', 'H', 'A', 'N', 'A', 'N', 'A', 'S', 'O', 'D', 'R', 'D', 'X', 'L', 'R', 'I', 'G', 'H', 'D', 'A', 'Z', 'C', 'Y', 'Z', 'M', 'T', '1', '0', '6', '3', 'M', 'L', 'L', 'G', '5', 'J', 'U', 'A', '8', 'W', 'O', 'D', '5', 'D', 'S', 'S', 'P', 'D', 'A', 'R', 'I', 'Z', 'E', 'Y', 'K', 'F', '1', '0', 'N', 'E', 'I', '7', 'T', '1', 'T', 'P', '2', 'B', 'I', 'R', 'H', 'C', 'Y', 'B', 'X', 'D', 'C', 'U', 'I', 'W', 'K', 'V', 'K', 'K', 'R', 'M', 'J', 'G', 'C', 'A', 'D', 'E', 'B', '2', '1', '0', '4', 'V', 'N', 'I', 'Y', 'E', 'N', 'K', 'N', 'L', 'N', '1', '5', 'S', 'C', 'O', 'O', 'L', 'D', 'O', 'C', 'O', 'N', 'T', 'A', 'I', 'N', 'S', 'A', 'L', 'L', 'T', 'H', 'E', 'F', 'O', 'L', 'L', 'O', 'W', 'I', 'N', 'G', 'T', 'E', 'X', 'T'.

Becoming **AN EDUCATED PERSON:**

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TOWARD A CORE CURRICULUM  
FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

American Council of Trustees and Alumni  
and  
Institute for Effective Governance

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**The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization committed to academic freedom, excellence, and accountability. Founded by Lynne Cheney and former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm in 1995, ACTA has members from over 400 colleges and universities. The Institute for Effective Governance (IEG) is a new membership and service organization for college and university trustees launched with ACTA's assistance.**

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## TOWARD A CORE CURRICULUM FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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*“The integrated core concerns itself with the universal experiences that are common to all people, with those shared activities without which human relationships are diminished and the quality of life reduced.”*

– ERNEST L. BOYER

By George C. Leef

July 2003

## Foreword

Education is not the same as training. Plato made the distinction between *techne* (skill) and *episteme* (knowledge). Becoming an educated person goes beyond the acquisition of a technical skill. It requires an understanding of one's place in the world—cultural as well as natural—in pursuit of a productive and meaningful life. And it requires historical perspective so that one does not just live, as Edmund Burke said, like “the flies of a summer,” born one day and gone the next, but as part of that “social contract” that binds our generation to those who have come before and to those who are yet to be born.

An education that achieves those goals must include the study of what Matthew Arnold called “the best that has been known and said.” It must comprehend the whole—the human world and its history, our own culture and those very different from ours, the natural world and the methods of its study, quantitative and verbal skills, and the lively arts.

The best way to provide that kind of education is a strong core curriculum—a required sequence of study that ensures that every student graduates with a solid understanding of such basic subjects as English and history, mathematics and science, foreign language and the arts.

Most colleges today fail to offer such a curriculum. You would not know it from reading their promotional material, which almost always promises a solid foundation in the liberal arts. In fact, most colleges offer something very different: a smorgasbord of courses designed less around the intellectual needs of the students than around the interests—and sometimes the hobbies or hobby-horses—of the professors.

At many universities, students—guided by little more than their 19-year-old tastes—are asked to develop a course of study from literally hundreds of offerings that will prepare them for a lifetime. Even when a college appears

to have a requirement in history, for example, it can be met by courses in departments ranging from dance to physical education. Thanks to an earlier study by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, we know that only ten percent of the 50 highest-ranked schools actually require a course in the History Department.

Colleges and universities owe it to their students to give them a coherent, rigorous set of core requirements sufficient for becoming an educated person. It is not fair to students—or parents who often foot the bill—to give them a Lego set of courses and leave them to construct their own contraption.

“Anything goes” is an easy regimen for students, professors, and administrators. At many schools, the task will fall to college and university trustees—who are responsible for the academic as well as financial health of their institutions—to make sure that their students receive the kind of education they will need for thoughtful, productive, and satisfying lives.

The good news is that there are still some colleges and universities that have maintained a strong core curriculum and they can serve as a model for trustees and others who want to work for a return to sound educational practices. *Becoming an Educated Person* explains what a core curriculum is and why it is important. But, more, it offers practical guidance for students, parents, trustees, donors, and even governors about what they can do to promote a better education for our young people. I hope that many will read it, and act.

– WILLIAM J. BENNETT

## Preface

Presumably, every college wants each graduate to become an educated person. Its conception of what an educated person should know and be able to do is expressed in its core curriculum—that set of required courses that every student must take. A strong core curriculum is at the heart of a solid college education.

This report looks specifically at the core curriculum: what it is, what it isn't, and why it is important. It defines the features of an excellent core curriculum and provides examples from different types and sizes of colleges and universities.

It is designed to be a guide for trustees, alumni, parents, students, and policymakers who wish to know more about core curricula and how institutions can construct and implement them.

This booklet is one of a series of publications on issues affecting the future of higher education. The primary author was George C. Leef, a senior consultant to the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.

ACTA publications include: *Restoring America's Legacy: The Challenge of Historical Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2002); *Can College Accreditation Live Up to Its Promise?* (2002); *Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2000); *The Intelligent Donor's Guide to College Giving* (1998) and *The Shakespeare File: What English Majors Are Really Studying* (1996).

We wish to thank William Chrisman for his assistance in the preparation of this booklet.

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## Becoming an Educated Person: Toward a Core Curriculum for College Students

More Americans than ever before are attending institutions of higher education. The percentage of the population pursuing college studies has grown steadily since the end of World War II. Today, almost 70 percent of high school graduates attend some postsecondary institution. If the quantity of students enrolled were all that mattered, we would undoubtedly regard our higher education system as a stunning success.

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But quantity is certainly not all that matters. Educational *quality* is at least as important if not more so, and many observers have documented a serious decline in the quality of the instruction and programs at many of our colleges and universities. Part of that decline stems from the abandonment of the idea that a college education should be built around a sound core curriculum.

At one time, most college students received a broad, general education that pushed their frontiers of knowledge and thinking ability far past those who had only a high school education. Today, however, many students graduate from college with less knowledge about the world and fewer useful skills than high schoolers of fifty years ago. Whether the subject is history, science, mathematics, English, or any other, both surveys and anecdotal evidence demonstrate that many recipients of college diplomas these days have a thin and patchy education, rather than the strong, general education that used to be the hallmark of college graduates.



Many colleges and universities have permitted the formerly rigorous, sequential curriculum that gave students a broad, general education to be replaced with a curriculum that does not guarantee students any particular learning experience. At many schools, students now determine the course of study largely on their own, as they choose among a vast array of classes. Often, they avoid courses that used to be regarded as the pillars of a college education. The problem of the vanishing core curriculum was recently noted by the Wingspread Group on Higher Education, which reported that,

26.2 percent of recent bachelor's degree recipients earned not a single undergraduate credit in history; 30.8 percent did not study mathematics of any kind; 39.6 percent earned no credits in either English or American literature; and 58.4 percent left college without any exposure to a foreign language. Much too frequently, American higher education now offers a smorgasbord of fanciful courses in a fragmented curriculum that accords as much credit for "Introduction to Tennis" and for courses in pop culture as it does for "Principles of English Composition," history or physics, thereby trivializing education—indeed, misleading students by implying that they are receiving the education they need for life when they are not.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the authors of *Integrity in the College Curriculum*, a report done under the auspices of the Association of American Colleges, wrote,

As for what passes as a college curriculum, almost anything goes. We have reached the point at which we are more confident about the length of a college education than its content and purpose.<sup>2</sup>

This report will address the problem of curriculum deterioration, propose remedies, and point to some schools that have resisted the trend and kept a strong core curriculum.

## The importance of a *general* education

Evidence that American college students are poorly served by the scattered, ill-defined curriculum that so many of them find in college is abundant. One continuing source of criticism is from the business community, which now has to spend large amounts on remedial programs to teach college graduates such elementary skills as clear writing. John Chambers, CEO of Cisco Systems, has written that “If universities don’t reinvent their curriculum and how they deliver them ... many students ... will ‘go to school’ on-line. Many big firms—Cisco, G.E., I.B.M., AT&T—are starting on-line academies to train new employees and to constantly upgrade the skills of existing ones.”<sup>3</sup>

A federal study of adult literacy done in 1993, the *National Adult Literacy Survey* (NALS), put some numbers behind the complaints of business leaders like Chambers. NALS ranked graduates who were tested from low (Level 1) to high (Level 5) in each of three skill areas. The results were depressing. In their ability to work with documents (e.g., bus schedules, tables, and charts), only 8 percent of four-year college graduates reached Level 5. In their ability to read and understand prose (e.g., newspaper articles), only 10 percent could perform at the highest level. In their ability to do mathematical work, only 12 percent reached the highest level. More disturbingly, about half of the college graduates fell below the intermediate level of proficiency in each skill area.<sup>4</sup>

But poor preparation for the world of work is only a part of the damage done by a weak college curriculum. Equally harmful is the fact that students miss out on their best opportunity to partake of the life-enriching elements of our civilization—literature, philosophy, art, music. Of course, it is possible for people to get that exposure after college, but it is much less likely that they will do so. The college years are the ideal time for young adults to expand their intellectual horizons. As Professor David Mulroy of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has written,

The time is brief that students spend in college under pressure to read what their teachers assign. Why should we ever assign anything other than the best books of all time? In four years, even the best students will read only a small fraction of those, but they could at least get started. Why *require* them to watch sitcoms and movies?<sup>5</sup>

The college curriculum is the *design* for what an educated person should know. It should, to the greatest extent possible, ensure that students finely hone their basic skills and learn about the most important aspects of our heritage, our culture, and our world.

Unfortunately, students are often tempted to take the path of least resistance in the quest for their college degree; many will choose to get the number of course credits they need by taking easy, entertaining courses if they are given the opportunity. It is the educational equivalent of a steady diet of junk food. Schools that have abandoned the idea of a core curriculum are allowing their students to earn degrees without taking the important coursework that used to be the hallmark of a college education.

Moreover, there is an important but often overlooked benefit in having students learn a core curriculum—it gives them common academic ground. A good set of core courses provides students with an abundance of intellectually stimulating material for discussion and argument. The depth of inquiry into, say, *The Iliad*, will be deeper if it is being read by 300 students instead

of three. Former University of Rochester president George Dennis O'Brien puts the point this way:

[A] coherent curriculum energizes the most underutilized university factor of production: students. Only in a concentrated, cohesive, cohorted curriculum (even if only a portion of the overall plan of study) can students educate one another. Whether it is Treisman's calculus students or my fraternity brethren struggling with Heidegger, the concentrated back and forth of student conversation is a powerful instrument for creating discriminating judgment.<sup>6</sup>

Educational leadership consists of requiring students to take a course of study that is intellectually challenging, broadening, and that offers them the opportunity to lead the more fulfilling and responsible lives that a general, comprehensive education makes possible. Physics majors, for instance, should have some familiarity with literature. English majors should have some familiarity with the scientific method. Both should have at least a basic understanding of history. Students will naturally concentrate their studies in the areas that interest them the most, but they will have more ability to communicate and cooperate with their fellow human beings if they have picked up more than a few random fragments of learning from other fields. Only a strong core curriculum makes that possible.

## Distribution requirements are not sufficient

Many colleges and universities give the *appearance* that they provide a good general education because they require students to take a certain number of credits in several departments other than their major. “Distribution requirements” is the term for this approach, and, while it is preferable to giving students complete *carte blanche* to direct their college studies, this cafeteria-style approach is a poor substitute for a true, carefully-designed core curriculum.

Some schools’ distribution requirements are stronger than others. The best are those that restrict students to choosing among a limited number of rigorous, broad-based courses that introduce them to basic areas of learning, e.g., “Principles of Economics,” “American History,” or “Masterworks of Western Literature.” It is possible for students to receive exposure to the critical areas of knowledge under the “distribution requirements” approach if it is structured so that students have no choice but to take a range of key foundational courses. Allowing students to have some choice is not necessarily objectionable, so long as the choices allowed are all consistent with the goal of giving the student a sound, general education.

But there are two inherent weaknesses in the “distribution requirements” approach. The first is a tendency for the administration gradually to allow more and more courses to be added, often in response to pleading by deans and influential professors that more of their courses be included on the list

of those that will satisfy a distribution requirement. As a result, at many schools, the number of courses that satisfy general education requirements is mind boggling. At one major state university, for instance, students can choose from almost 600 different courses in meeting the distribution requirements. Very few of those courses offer the student knowledge that is integral to a strong general education. The great majority are narrow and trendy.

Once the distribution requirements begin to loosen, students can take an odd list of random, unconnected, and sometimes academically dubious courses that fail to give them a well-rounded education. The humanities requirement might be satisfied with a course on “Vampire Fiction.” The history requirement might be satisfied with a course on “History of College Football.” The science requirement might be satisfied with a course on “Personal Fitness.” When such courses can supplant the fundamental courses, students fail to obtain any grounding in the major scholarly disciplines. They may earn a degree, but haven’t received an education.

College students are usually neither well prepared nor motivated to select a rigorous, coherent program of study. A student who has not read any great books may have no idea why some books are great and why they merit study. As a student from a university with a strong core curriculum commented, “They made me read the books I didn’t know I wanted to read.” That statement shows precisely why a core curriculum is beneficial. It can make students read books they didn’t know they wanted to read. It broadens their horizons in ways they could never have imagined.

The second reason why the distribution requirements approach is flawed is that even an assortment of sound introductory courses—English 101, Philosophy 101, etc.—is not a good substitute for a series of courses designed to give students a broad educational foundation. Introductory departmental courses are usually designed to be the first step in specialization and do not necessarily give the kind of overview that all students

should have. Clarence H. Faust, former Dean of the College at the University of Chicago, explains:

Each student may be required to take one course in the physical sciences, one in the social sciences, and one in literature. But this device is frustrated by another difficulty of departmentalization. Since each of the courses in the physical sciences is, in large part, planned as the first step toward specialization in a departmental field, it can only incidentally and accidentally serve as an introduction to the physical sciences as a whole, though such an introduction is precisely what is needed for the purposes of general education.<sup>7</sup>

Rather than compelling students to choose among an assortment of introductory departmental courses—or, worse, to choose among a vast array of departmental offerings—educational leaders should, in Dean Faust's words, “determine the essentials of a liberal education and . . . devise an integrated system of courses to provide them.”<sup>8</sup>

It is the responsibility of colleges and universities to structure a curriculum that will serve their students well for a lifetime. The distribution requirements approach cannot ensure that.

## The aims of education

Professors and university leaders will debate at great length precisely what courses should go into a school's core curriculum, but most would agree that it must ensure a full and broad educational experience for students. We believe that all students should derive from their college years the following experiences and attributes.

*First*, they should learn crucial habits of mind: inquiry, logical thinking and critical analysis. Those aren't taught in any one class; rather, they are built up and refined over time as the student sees how great minds have wrestled with questions in many different fields of knowledge.

*Second*, they should become *literate*—proficient in their reading, writing, and speaking. Literacy is a vital and increasingly overlooked component of education that should not be regarded as the exclusive province of the English department.

*Third*, students should become familiar with quantitative reasoning. In a world filled with numbers and statistics, responsible citizenship calls for an understanding of the correct, and incorrect, uses of numerical data.

*Fourth*, they should have the perspective on human life that only history can give. People with a grasp of Western civilization, world history, and American history are much better able to see the complexity, uncertainty, and limitations inherent in the human condition. They understand the long



struggle to create free and civilized societies. Knowing how we have gotten to our present situation is valuable in comprehending where society may, and can, go in the future.

*Fifth*, every culture has contributed to the rich repository of human experience. In an interconnected world, it is important to study cultures that may be very different from our own.

*Sixth*, students should have an understanding of the natural world and of the methods the sciences use to explore that world. They also need to appreciate what sorts of questions are susceptible of scientific inquiry and which are not.

*Seventh*, to prepare themselves to become citizens, they should study the American political system and principles articulated in the country's great founding documents.

*Eighth*, to prepare themselves to participate successfully in a dynamic economy, they should study economics and such basic principles as the law of supply and demand.

*Ninth*, they should learn something about art, music and aesthetics. Besides adding greatly to the enjoyment of life, a study of the arts shows the importance of disciplined creativity.

*Tenth*, in an increasingly interdependent world, students should learn a *foreign language*.

Colleges and universities seem to have forgotten that their purpose is to provide each student with an *education*—not just to process through as many paying bodies as they can.

## Constructing a core curriculum

With those points in mind, what specifically might a good core curriculum consist of?

There is not a single “right” answer. There are many combinations of courses that will provide a coherent, rigorous education, but the model put forward in 1989 by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) provides a starting-point for discussion.

The NEH report, *50 Hours: A Core Curriculum for College Students* by Lynne Cheney, recommends allocating 50 credit hours, of the approximately 120 that it typically takes to graduate, to a core. That leaves 40 credit hours for the major, as well as 30 credit hours for elective courses.

*50 Hours* suggests that students take 18 credit hours in courses on Cultures and Civilizations, covering the Origins of Civilization, Western Civilization, and American Civilization, with electives chosen among courses on other cultures, including Asian, Islamic, African, and Latin American civilizations. The courses would include such seminal works as the Bible, Plato’s *Republic*, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, the *Analects* of Confucius, the Qu’ran, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Mill’s *On Liberty*, and the Declaration of Independence.

Next, students should take 12 credit hours in foreign language, preferably continuing with the language they began studying in high school or earlier.

*50 Hours* further recommends 6 hours in mathematics, with courses that are neither remedial nor suited only to the math major. The emphasis should be on the scope and power of mathematics, giving students a sense of *doing mathematics*, and also learning what mathematics *can do*.

Students would also devote 8 credit hours to the natural sciences, taking a year-long laboratory course that would acquaint them with the methods and fundamental findings of the major fields of science. Students would study how scientists have explained matter, energy and motion, the universe and the forces of nature, and life.

Finally, students would take 6 credit hours in the social sciences—a year-long course exploring the ways in which the social sciences have explained political, economic and social experiences, with students reading such thinkers as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, J.S. Mill, Sigmund Freud and Emile Durkheim.

The *50 Hours* curriculum consists of year-long courses, many of them covering several disciplines. That approach has two advantages. It is comprehensive, since the major natural sciences and social sciences are covered. Equally important, the different fields of knowledge are presented as a meaningful whole. One professor quotes a graduating senior as saying, “I had some good courses. I just wish they had added up to something.” If that student had taken the *50 Hours* curriculum, he would have had courses that do add up to something—a coherent sequence of learning.

Some schools choose to designate department-based courses to meet their core curriculum goals. Brooklyn College, part of the City University of New York, provides a curriculum in which the separate units are offered by individual departments. In science, for example, a year-long sequence consists of a half-term each of physics, biology, chemistry, and geology.

The Brooklyn College Core has ten components, with each course designed to “introduce material of fundamental and lasting significance,” plus a

foreign language requirement.

Core Studies 1 – The Classical Origins of Western Culture

Core Studies 2 – Introduction to Art; Introduction to Music

Core Studies 3 – People, Power, and Politics

Core Studies 4 – The Shaping of the Modern World

Core Studies 5 – Introduction to Mathematical Reasoning and  
Computer Science

Core Studies 6 – Landmarks of Literature

Core Studies 7 – Science in Modern Life I (Chemistry/Physics)

Core Studies 8 – Science in Modern Life II (Biology/Geology)

Core Studies 9 – Comparative Studies in African, Asian, Latin  
American, and Pacific Cultures

Core Studies 10 – Knowledge, Existence, and Values

A different core curriculum model is offered by the “great books” programs at schools such as St. John’s College and Thomas Aquinas College. Rather than dividing knowledge into disciplines, every subject is studied through the writings of its greatest thinkers, from Homer to Einstein and beyond.

Some institutions, most notably Columbia University, have hybrid curricula combining some required core courses with distribution requirements in other fields. At Columbia, undergraduates must complete all nine elements of the core curriculum. Most are required courses: Contemporary Civilization, Literature Humanities, Art Humanities, Music Humanities, Logic and Rhetoric, and Physical Education. In addition, two elements of the core—Major Cultures and Science—allow the student to choose among a set of alternatives. Students must also satisfy a foreign language requirement, either by showing proficiency or completing appropriate coursework.

The Appendix includes details about core curricula at a wide assortment of colleges and universities.

## Determining whether your school really has a core curriculum

Many colleges and universities say that they adhere to a core curriculum, but in fact do not. Professor Alexander Astin of U.C.L.A. studied the curricula of a large number of institutions and found that while more than 90 percent say that they have a core curriculum, only two percent have a “true core.” A college has a true core if there is a set of core courses, required for all students, designed specifically to provide them a general education across the main academic disciplines.<sup>9</sup>

How can you tell if your college has a strong core curriculum?

*First*, do the “core” courses cover all the important fields of knowledge, or is it possible for students to complete the core without taking any history or math or science, as the Wingspread Group found to be so common?

*Second*, does the school readily allow waivers and substitutions so that students can avoid taking the courses that make up the alleged core? If so, then the institution is offering little more than the “distribution requirements” approach.

*Third*, do the courses that meet the requirements have appropriate breadth and substance? A college may, for instance, appear to have a core history requirement, but if it can be satisfied by “Environmental Political Policy,” as it can at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, or other courses that do

not provide the student with broad exposure to the important aspects of American or world history, it fails the test.

*Fourth*, look at the syllabi of the courses comprising the “core” rather than just their catalogue descriptions. Course catalogue descriptions can vary substantially from the actual course content. For example, a course bearing the title, “Introduction to American History,” might actually be taught as a very narrow course devoted to the professor’s current research topic. The core courses should be devoted to providing students with a broad knowledge base. Beware of misleading labels and descriptions.

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## Questions about the core curriculum

Some educators will object to the idea of reintroducing a core curriculum. Here are several objections that may be raised, with suggested responses.

*Question:* Does a core curriculum help a student in his or her career?

*Answer:* Yes, broadly-educated people are better able to make career changes, move up the job ladder, and compete in a changing economic environment.

Some people contend that you only need a vocational or technical skill to get a good job. In this view, a well-rounded education is a waste of time. However, the average person now changes jobs six times during his or her working career. People who start as technicians often move up to management. With the faster pace of technological change, jobs and even whole industries must quickly change and adapt. That makes it imperative for workers to have skills of lifelong learning to keep up.

Furthermore, most businesses want young workers who have a broad educational foundation and are adaptable and trainable for whatever needs arise, rather than workers who have overly concentrated in specific training that may soon be obsolete. Bear in mind also that with a core curriculum, students still can and will major in the specific discipline that most interests them—they will just be surrounding their major with a broad and beneficial

general education. A vocational or technological focus and a strong general education are not mutually exclusive.

*Question:* Does a core curriculum have to deal only with the “traditional” subjects?

*Answer:* Not at all. Since the goal is to ensure that students receive a well-rounded education, there is no reason to restrict the core curriculum to only those subjects that were studied in the distant past. For example, economics has not traditionally been included in core curricula, but it is hard to see how someone could be considered well-educated who did not understand such basics as the law of supply and demand. Similarly, it is now important to study Asian and other civilizations, as well as that of the West. A sound core curriculum may include the study of the past while adding topics that are quite new.

*Question:* Won't a core curriculum be unpopular with students?

*Answer:* No. Experience shows that, for the most part, students prefer a high-quality school with a good reputation. The experience of schools and systems that have moved to a strong core suggests that many students regard it as an attractive feature.

A case in point is one of the nation's largest university systems, the State University of New York (SUNY). In 1999, the university's board of trustees adopted a resolution requiring a minimum of 30 credit hours in general education for each student covering mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, American history, Western civilization, the arts, the humanities, a foreign language, and information management. Instituting the core was a sharp change from the previous “distribution requirements” approach.

Rather than the stagnant or falling enrollments that some had predicted,



SUNY experienced a significant increase in the year following the implementation of the core resolution.

**Question:** Doesn't a core curriculum exclude women, minorities, and non-Western cultures?

**Answer:** No, a core curriculum need not and should not exclude any group. Keep in mind that a core curriculum is meant to expose students to a wide-ranging education that touches upon all the main academic disciplines—science, mathematics, literature, philosophy, history, the fine arts, and so on. That part of the core that deals with culture can be inclusive, including the best of all cultures. The core curriculum proposed in *50 Hours* (discussed above) does exactly that. Great books are great precisely because they transcend the accidents of race, ethnicity, or gender, and speak to timeless questions about the human condition.

**Question:** Do the trustees have any role to play in overseeing the curriculum?

**Answer:** The academic program is *primarily* the responsibility of the faculty. Ultimately, however, it is up to the board of trustees to ensure the academic quality of the college or university. The trustees' responsibility is to *the educational mission of the school*, not to make life convenient for the faculty members and administrators who work there. As stewards, trustees rightfully should determine what they believe every graduate of their institution should know.

At the same time, a board should exercise its oversight responsibilities with the cooperation and involvement of the faculty and administration. A decision to move in the direction of a strong core curriculum should be made only after full consultation with the faculty. And the faculty should have the primary responsibility for designing the core curriculum within the outline established by the board.

*Question:* Will the faculty rebel against the introduction of a core curriculum?

*Answer:* Not if the core is implemented with full consultation. A core curriculum certainly can put a burden on the faculty. Broad-based courses are harder to teach than courses related to a professor's own research. A "great books" core course may place a strain on narrowly-trained professors who have not themselves read Plato and Dante. Courses that cover more than one science may create friction between departments that must cooperate in offering the course. Most of all, departments worry about enrollments. A loose distribution requirement allows every department to have at least one course on the humanities or the social science list. A strict history requirement—not one that allows students to take History of Recreation offered by the Physical Education department—causes a shift in student enrollments that may threaten other departments.

The question should not be, what is most convenient for the faculty or the administration, but rather what is best for the education of the students. If the faculty designs the curriculum with that consideration in mind, the problems noted above can be solved.

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## What can be done?

Moving to a core curriculum that provides each student with a well-rounded education is an idea that almost everyone applauds in the abstract. The difficulty is that to do so means making changes on campus, and almost every change makes someone uncomfortable. The professor who has written a book on a narrow point within his specialty and enjoys teaching just about that, for example, is unlikely to welcome a change that makes him instead teach a broad survey course. To overcome the inevitable resistance to change and to motivate them to action, it will be necessary to convince a large number of interested parties that the lack of a strong general education is a serious problem.

### *Governors*

Governors can play a vital role in reforming higher education in their state university systems.

Besides having a “bully pulpit” from which to argue to the public in favor of a strong core curriculum, governors can use their appointment powers to put individuals in positions in the higher education system who are committed to restoring academic rigor and discipline. The rule of thumb for appointments at any level, from Education Secretary to regent or trustee, should be that the individual must be committed to educational excellence, not just to the status quo.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni has worked with governors on statewide meetings of college and university trustees that address issues of academic quality and governance. We are ready to provide assistance in meeting the challenge of creating or restoring a core curriculum.

Governors can also initiate a thorough review of the curricula at the schools in the state system, a review that should be done by people who do not have an interest in preserving the status quo. ACTA's highly-publicized study of the City University of New York's core requirements was the essential catalyst for building public support and prompting improvements in that system. ACTA is available to evaluate the core curricula of individual colleges, university systems, or the higher education system of entire states.

### *Trustees*

Trustees have legal and fiduciary responsibility for the educational, as well as fiscal, health of their institutions. Yet it is not uncommon for trustees to have no knowledge of whether, for example, there is a Western civilization requirement at their schools.

The first task of trustees is to educate themselves. The general education curriculum should be reviewed. Ideally, this task should be assigned to the board's academic affairs or educational quality committee. If the board does not have such a committee, it should create one and put one of its most committed, responsible trustees in charge.

Second, trustees should review the quality of the core requirements. The guidelines in this booklet can help. Sometimes it is wise for a board to bring in outside consultants to provide an evaluation. ACTA can recommend distinguished educators who could do a thorough and authoritative review.

If there are weaknesses in the curriculum, the board should ask the president to work with the faculty to address them. A date certain should be set for the president to recommend solutions to the board.

If the recommendations are satisfactory, the board should approve them and a time-line for putting them into effect. Progress should be reviewed on a quarterly basis, and should be one of the factors discussed in that year's presidential evaluation.

If the recommendations are not satisfactory, the board may have to initiate changes itself. The board could, for example, require that students take at least three hours of American history. It will then have to monitor implementation on a regular basis.

ACTA works with boards of trustees engaged in academic review and program evaluation, helping them to fulfill their responsibilities while respecting academic principles and protocols. A memorandum for trustees pertaining specifically to the core curriculum is available from ACTA, discussing the principles trustees should follow when moving to implement a core curriculum, along with two case studies.

### *Alumni*

Alumni have standing within their college communities and should speak out for higher standards, especially in the area of general education. More than half of all alumni give to their alma maters. Instead of giving to the annual fund or capital campaign, alumni should direct their giving in ways that support educational excellence. Gifts can be targeted to the support of some part of the core curriculum. At one school without a core curriculum, donors provided funds for faculty to design one. Through its **Fund for Academic Renewal**, ACTA advises donors and helps them direct their gifts to academic programs that reflect their educational values.

### *Students and Parents*

Before selecting a college, students and parents should read college catalogues carefully and decide which schools prescribe a course of study that

reflects a thoughtful and convincing educational philosophy. Some of the most prestigious (and expensive) schools have a very weak or non-existent core curriculum—on the mistaken assumption that if students are smart enough, it doesn't much matter what they study. Conversely, some lesser-known schools are hidden gems, offering a well-constructed curriculum and excellent teaching at a far lower cost.

Even if a student enrolls in a school that adheres to the typically wide-open distribution requirements approach, it is still possible to choose good courses and get a sound, well-rounded education. An excellent short book to consult in that case is *A Student's Guide to the Core Curriculum* by Mark Henrie, published by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute.

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## Conclusion

College students need guidance from scholars in what they should learn in college. If they already knew what books and ideas were the most important, they wouldn't need to go to college.

The prevalent smorgasbord approach to the curriculum, allowing students to select almost any combination of courses, results in patchwork education that reflects youthful interests, but at the expense of life-long educational needs.

It is time for those who care about the future of our young people—and the future of our nation—to become forceful advocates for a core curriculum that gives students a general education that will equip them to lead fuller, richer lives after they have completed their college years.

## Notes

1. Wingspread Group on Higher Education, The Johnson Foundation, *American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education* (1993), p. 5.
2. Association of American Colleges, *Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community*, 2d. ed. (1990), p. 2.
3. John Chambers quoted by Murray Sperber, *Beer and Circus* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2000), p. 269.
4. Irwin S. Kirsch et al., *Adult Literacy in America: a first look at the findings of the National Adult Literacy Survey*, (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 1993).
5. David Mulroy, "Why Colleges Need Great Books," *Wisconsin Interest*, vol. 9, no. 3 (fall 2000), p. 3.
6. George Dennis O'Brien, *All the Essential Half-Truths About Higher Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 205.
7. Clarence H. Faust et al., *The Idea and Practice of General Education: An Account of the College of the University of Chicago*, ed. F. Champion Ward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 10.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
9. S. Hurtado, A. W. Astin, and E. Dey, "Varieties of General Education Programs: An Empirically Based Taxonomy," *Journal of General Education*, vol. 40 (1991), pp. 133-162.



## Suggested Readings

*Adult Literacy in America: a first look at the findings of the National Adult Literacy Survey*, by Irwin S. Kirsch, Ann Jungeblut, Lynn Jenkins, and Andrew Kolstad, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1993, available on-line at <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/resources/execsumm.asp>.

*All the Essential Half-Truths about Higher Education*, by George Dennis O'Brien, University of Chicago Press, 1998.

*American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education*, Wingspread Group on Higher Education, The Johnson Foundation, 1993.

"A Battle Plan for Professors to Recapture the Curriculum," by Frank H. T. Rhodes, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 14 September 2001.

*Beer and Circus*, by Murray Sperber, Henry Holt & Co., 2000.

*Caught Short: General Education at Nine Minnesota Public Universities*, Minnesota Association of Scholars, 2001.

*The Dissolution of General Education: A Review of Arizona's Three State Universities' Programs of Study and Degree Requirements*, Arizona Association of Scholars, 2000.

*The Dissolution of General Education: 1914-1993*, by Stephen H. Balch and Rita C. Zurcher, National Association of Scholars, 1996.

*Dumbing Down: Multiculturalism and the Demise of the Liberal Arts at Maryland's Public Universities and Colleges, Except Morgan State*, by Robert

Lerner and Althea Nagai, Calvert Institute for Policy Research, Maryland Association of Scholars, 1999.

*A Failure to Set High Standards: CUNY's General-Education Requirements*, Empire Foundation for Policy Research and American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 1998.

*50 Hours: A Core Curriculum for College Students*, by Lynne V. Cheney, National Endowment for the Humanities, 1989.

*General Education and the Core Curriculum: A Symposium*, edited by Charles Landesman, Nu Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at Hunter College, 2000. (Available from ACTA.)

*General Education in a Free Society: Report of the Harvard Committee*, Harvard University Press, 1945.

*The Idea and Practice of General Education: An Account of the College of the University of Chicago*, by Present and Former Members of the Faculty, edited by F. Champion Ward, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

*The Idea of a College*, by Robert Maynard Hutchins, Measure 1, fall 1950. (Available at [www.realuofc.org](http://www.realuofc.org).)

*Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community*, Association of American Colleges, 2d. ed., 1990.

*Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century*, by Jerry L. Martin and Anne D. Neal, American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2000.

"Memorandum for College and University Trustees on Adoption of a Core Curriculum," Institute for Effective Governance, 2003. (Available from ACTA.)

*Rebuilding the Liberal Arts Curriculum: A Handbook for Faculty and Administrators*, National Association of Scholars, 2003.

*Recalling Education*, by Hugh Mercer Curtler, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2001.

*Restoring America's Legacy: The Challenge of Historical Literacy in the 21st Century*, by Anne D. Neal and Jerry L. Martin, American Council of Trustees

and Alumni, 2002.

*The Shakespeare File: What English Majors are Really Studying*, by Jerry L. Martin, American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 1996.

*SUNY's Core Curricula: The Failure to Set Consistent and High Academic Standards*, New York Association of Scholars and Empire Foundation for Policy Research, 1996.

*A Student's Guide to the Core Curriculum*, by Mark C. Henrie, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2001.

*The Troubling State of General Education: A Study of Six Virginia Public Colleges and Universities*, Virginia Association of Scholars, 1998.

"Varieties of General Education Programs: An Empirically Based Taxonomy," by S. Hurtado, A. W. Astin, and E. Dey, *Journal of General Education*, vol. 40, 1991.

"Why Colleges Need Great Books," by David Mulroy, *Wisconsin Interest*, vol. 9, no. 3, fall 2000.

## Appendix

### Colleges and Universities that have a Core Curriculum

This list provides examples of existing core curricula in a variety of school contexts—public and private institutions, research universities, small liberal arts colleges, and schools with a religious tradition. We are not recommending one approach but only offering examples that may prove useful to those who would like to establish or reestablish a core curriculum. In many cases, descriptions of those curricula are drawn directly or excerpted from the college websites.

#### **BOSTON UNIVERSITY**

121 Bay State Road  
Boston, Massachusetts 02215  
[www.bu.edu](http://www.bu.edu)

The Core Curriculum in the College of Arts and Sciences at Boston University is an innovative program of eight historically based, integrated courses providing an in-depth study of classic works (Western and non-Western) in the humanities, important ideas in the natural sciences, and the concerns and theoretical bases of the social sciences. Each Core course consists of small seminar groups combined with a series of lectures. Science Core courses include both discussions and laboratories.

### **Freshman Year:**

Core Humanities I – The Ancient World

Core Natural Sciences I – The Evolution of the Physical Universe and of the Earth (lab)

Core Humanities II – Antiquity and the Medieval World

Core Natural Sciences II – Evolution of Life and Intelligence (lab)

### **Sophomore Year:**

Core Humanities III – The Renaissance

Core Social Sciences I – Social Sciences I sets the historical framework and emphasizes the distinctive perspectives of the social sciences in understanding our world.

Core Humanities IV – From the Enlightenment to the Modern World

Core Social Sciences II – The Individual and the World

Boston University also offers a core program in its College of General Studies. See [www.bu.edu/cgs](http://www.bu.edu/cgs).

## **BROOKLYN COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

2900 Bedford Avenue

Brooklyn, New York 11210

[www.brooklyn.cuny.edu](http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Brooklyn College's core curriculum must be completed by all candidates for a baccalaureate degree. The core curriculum consists of ten interrelated courses called "Core Studies" plus a foreign language requirement. It is designed to give the student an overall view of a subject or branch of learning, and a substantial amount of information, which together with other

core courses will provide a broad background in the liberal arts and sciences.

The Core Studies courses are:

**Core Studies 1** – The Classical Origins of Western Culture

**Core Studies 2** – Introduction to Art; Introduction to Music

**Core Studies 3** – People, Power, and Politics

**Core Studies 4**– The Shaping of the Modern World

**Core Studies 5** – Introduction to Mathematical Reasoning and Computer Science

**Core Studies 6** – Landmarks of Literature

**Core Studies 7** – Science in Modern Life I (Chemistry/Physics)

**Core Studies 8** – Science in Modern Life II (Biology/Geology)

**Core Studies 9** – Comparative Studies in African, Asian, Latin American, and Pacific Cultures

**Core Studies 10** – Knowledge, Existence, and Values

**Foreign Language** – Students are required to complete one course in a foreign language at Level 3 (the third semester of study at the college level) or to demonstrate an equivalent proficiency.

## **CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

1200 East California Boulevard

Pasadena, California 91125

[www.caltech.edu](http://www.caltech.edu)

Well known for its programs in science and mathematics, CalTech does not ignore the liberal arts. Although it grants only B.S. degrees, it requires all CalTech undergrads to take the same core courses during their freshman and sophomore years—no matter what major they are planning to choose.

**Mathematics (5 terms):**

Calculus, ordinary differential equations, and infinite series; linear algebra; vectors and analytic geometry; calculus of several variables; probability.

**Physics (5 terms):**

Classical mechanics, electromagnetism, waves, quantum mechanics, statistical physics.

**Chemistry (2 terms):**

General and quantitative chemistry, including one term of lab.

**Biology (1 term):**

A topical course introducing a variety of tools and concepts of modern biology.

**Freshman "Menu" Course:**

One term of astronomy or earth/environmental science or number theory.

**Introductory Lab Courses (2 terms):**

Freshman chemistry lab, plus one other lab chosen from offerings in applied physics, biology, chemical engineering, chemistry, electrical engineering, engineering, geology, or physics.

**Science Communication (2 terms)****Humanities and Social Sciences (12 terms):**

Two terms of freshman humanities courses emphasizing writing; two terms of introductory social science courses; two terms of advanced humanities courses; and two terms of advanced social science courses are required. The remaining four courses may be chosen from any of the humanities/social science offerings.

**Physical Education (3 terms)**

## **COLGATE UNIVERSITY**

13 Oak Drive

Hamilton, New York 13346

[www.colgate.edu](http://www.colgate.edu)

Curricular requirements for graduation at Colgate include the completion of the general education program. Colgate's general education program is structured so that students take advantage of the diversity of a liberal arts college. It has two aspects: the Liberal Arts Core Curriculum and Distribution Requirement.

### **Liberal Arts Core Curriculum:**

The Liberal Arts Core program consists of three required components and a fourth, optional component. Each of the components of the core program is designed to address questions of identity, culture, and knowledge.

Scientific Perspectives on the World (CORE 110-149)

Continuity and Change in the West – Western Traditions (CORE 151); The Challenge of Modernity (CORE 152)

Cultures of Africa, Asia, and the Americas (CORE 160-199)

A fourth component includes optional courses that are available to students seeking distinction in the Liberal Arts Core Curriculum.

### **Distribution Requirement:**

Colgate's academic departments are organized into categories or divisions, described below. Colgate requires students to achieve passing grades in one course within two different departments in each of the three divisions (a total of six courses).

The Humanities Division

The Natural Sciences and Mathematics Division



### The Social Sciences Division

The Division of University Studies includes inter-divisional programs and departments which include: Africana and Latin American Studies, Asian Studies, Environmental Studies, Jewish Studies, et al. Courses within interdisciplinary programs and departments that are cross-listed with other departments may be included among the six required to meet the distribution requirement.

### **Other Requirements:**

#### First-Year Seminar:

One of four courses that each student selects for the first semester, designed to introduce students to a variety of liberal arts topics, skills, and ways of learning. First-Year Seminars may count towards fulfillment of requirements within the Liberal Arts Core Curriculum or Distribution Requirement.

Students must take required physical education courses and demonstrate competency in a foreign language to graduate.

## **COLUMBIA COLLEGE**

212 Hamilton Hall

Mail Code 2807

1130 Amsterdam Avenue

New York, New York 10027

[www.columbia.edu](http://www.columbia.edu)

The Core Curriculum is the cornerstone of a Columbia education. The goal is to provide all Columbia students, regardless of their major or concentration, with wide-ranging perspectives on significant ideas and achievements in literature, philosophy, history, music, art, and science.

The following required courses constitute Columbia's Core Curriculum.

**Literature Humanities:**

Humanities C1001-C1002 – Masterpieces of Western Literature and Philosophy

**Contemporary Civilization:**

C1101-C1102 – Introduction to Contemporary Civilization

**Art Humanities:**

Humanities W1122 – Masterpieces of Western Art

**Music Humanities:**

Humanities W1123 – Masterpieces of Western Music

**Logic and Rhetoric:**

English C1007 – Logic and Rhetoric

**Major Cultures Requirement:**

This component of the Core explores the globally influential and historically rooted cultures and civilizations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Students must complete two courses, one of which must be a broad introductory course, selected from approved lists.

**Science Requirement:**

Three courses must be completed: at least two sequential courses in a department, or one interdepartmental sequence, and a third course from a different department.

**Foreign Language Requirement:**

Four terms or the equivalent.

**Physical Education Requirement**

## **GROVE CITY COLLEGE**

100 Campus Drive

Grove City, Pennsylvania 16127

[www.gcc.edu](http://www.gcc.edu)

Grove City College insists that all of its graduates possess, in addition to specialized knowledge in major or professional fields, a high level of cultural literacy and communication skills. Students are required to complete 38 to 50 credit hours of general education courses with emphasis in the humanities, social sciences, quantitative and logical reasoning, laboratory sciences and foreign language.

Grove City's General Education Requirements are:

### **Humanities Core (Civilization Series):**

All students are required to take six three-credit courses (18 hours) that discuss the origins, merit and influence of history's most decisive ideas, literary works and artistic products. Although the Humanities Core courses examine many different points of view and consider other nations and cultures, they emphasize America's religious, political and economic heritage of individual freedom and responsibility and its part in the development of Western civilization.

### **Social Sciences/International Studies:**

All students are required to choose one course from each of the following groupings (six hours): International Courses (Business, Economics, Global Studies, History, Political Science, Sociology) and General Social Science (Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology).

### **Quantitative/Logical Reasoning:**

All Students are required to take a total of six hours from the following choices: any Mathematics course, Business 201, Philosophy 201 or 211, and Psychology 203.

**Natural Sciences (with laboratories):**

All students must take eight hours of lab science courses from an approved list by the end of their junior year. These courses may be in the specific science departments or drawn from survey courses designed to meet general education requirements for liberal arts students such as "Fundamentals of the Universe" and "Atoms, Molecules and the Material World."

**Foreign Language Proficiency:**

All B.A. graduates and non-science B.S. graduates must demonstrate skills equivalent to those gained in a two-semester second-year college language program.

**PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY**

24255 Pacific Coast Highway

Malibu, California 90263

[www.pepperdine.edu](http://www.pepperdine.edu)

Each candidate for the bachelor's degree at Seaver College, Pepperdine's college of letters, arts, and sciences, must complete a series of broad and intensive learning experiences crossing disciplinary lines. The requirements for general education are designed so that students have core courses in common. Students are encouraged to complete as many of the general education requirements as possible during the freshman and sophomore years.

**English Composition (1 course):**

English Composition I

**Literature (1 course from an approved list)****Speech and Rhetoric (1 course):**

Public Speaking and Rhetorical Analysis

**Mathematics (1 course):**

Nature of Mathematics

**Laboratory Science (1 course from a an approved list)**

**Western Heritage (3-course sequence):**

Western Heritage I – prehistoric times through the late Middle Ages

Western Heritage II – Early Modern Period

Western Heritage III – Industrial Revolution to the present

**Non-Western Heritage (1 course from an approved list)**

**The American Experience (2-course sequence):**

The American People and Politics; History of the American

Peoples

**Christianity and Culture (3-course sequence):**

History and Religion of Israel; History and Religion of Early

Christianity; Christianity and Culture

**Human Institutions and Behavior (2 courses from 3 offerings):**

Economic Principles; Introduction to Psychology; Introduction to

Sociology

**Fine Arts (2 units from a an approved list)**

**Foreign Language :**

Through the third-semester level of the language, including: Chinese,

French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Greek, Biblical Hebrew.

**Physical Education (1 course):**

Health and Lifestyles

**First-Year Seminar:**

Introduces student to college experience and academic inquiry.

**Junior Writing Portfolio:**

Submitted in student's junior year, demonstrates student's writing

competency across the curriculum.

**Writing Intensive Course:**

Designated course in student's major discipline.

**Research Methods/Presentation Skills:**

Designated courses in student's major discipline.

## **ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE**

PO Box 2800  
Annapolis, Maryland 21404  
[www.sjca.edu](http://www.sjca.edu)

1160 Camino Cruz Blanca  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505  
[www.sjcsf.edu](http://www.sjcsf.edu)

St. John's seeks to restore the true meaning of a liberal arts education. Traditionally, the liberal arts were: grammar, rhetoric, logic—the arts of language; and arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy—the arts of mathematics. In more contemporary terms, the liberal arts bring to light what is involved in the use of words and numbers in all kinds of discursive thought, in analyzing, speaking, and writing, and in measuring, deducing, and demonstrating.

The essentially all-required great books curriculum at St. John's College is a four-year core, covering the seminal ideas of Western civilization from Homer to Einstein. All undergraduates read the same books, and take the same classes, earning identical Bachelor of Arts degrees in Liberal Arts. There are no departments and no majors.

## **SEWANEE THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH**

735 University Avenue  
Sewanee, Tennessee 37383  
[www.sewanee.edu](http://www.sewanee.edu)

The University of the South offers a challenging program in the liberal arts. Emphasizing the mastery of fundamental disciplines, the academic program of the College of Arts and Sciences develops the intellect and character of its students to prepare them for lives of service in a rapidly changing world.

The core curriculum for Sewanee students is comprised of the following elements.

**Language and Literature:**

One course in English (English 101) and one course in foreign language at the 300 level.

**Mathematics and the Natural Sciences:**

One course in mathematics and two courses in the natural sciences. At least one of the two science courses must have a full laboratory.

**History and the Social Sciences:**

One course in history (History 100) and one course in the social sciences. While it focuses primarily on the Western tradition, attention is given to others. The course also introduces students to methods of approaching historical study.

**Philosophy and Religion:**

One course in philosophy or religion.

**Art and the Performing Arts:**

One course in art, art history, music, or theatre.

**Writing-Intensive Courses:**

Each student must take at least one course during the freshman year and one course during the sophomore or junior year which is designated as writing-intensive.

**Physical Education:**

Two courses (not counted among the 32 full academic courses required for graduation).

## **THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE**

10000 North Ojai Road  
Santa Paula, California 93060  
[www.thomasaquinas.edu](http://www.thomasaquinas.edu)

All students at Thomas Aquinas College take a four-year curriculum of the arts and sciences “essential to a life of faith and reason” and receive the same degree: Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts. Textbooks are replaced by the “Great Books” from Aristotle, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas to Dante, Shakespeare, Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein. Working in small seminars, tutorials and laboratories, requirements include:

### **Tutorial:**

Language (2 years)  
Logic (1 year)  
Mathematics (4 years)  
Music (1 year)  
Philosophy (3 years)  
Theology (4 years)

### **Laboratory (4 years)**

### **Seminar (4 years)**

### **Senior Thesis**

## **UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**

1116 East 59th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637  
[www.uchicago.edu](http://www.uchicago.edu)

Undergraduate education at Chicago begins with a common core curriculum. The objective of Chicago’s rigorous core of general education for first- and second-year students is to raise fundamental questions and to encourage those habits of mind and those critical, analytical, and writing skills that are most urgent to a well-informed member of civil society.



The Core or Common Core requirements are:

**Humanities, Civilization Studies, and the Arts (6 quarter-courses):**

Students take six quarters in humanities and civilization studies, with at least two from the humanities sequences on the interpretation of historical, literary, and philosophical texts; at least one in the dramatic, musical, or visual arts; and at least two from a civilization studies sequence.

**Natural and Mathematical Sciences (6 quarter-courses):**

Students take six quarter-courses in the natural and mathematical sciences with at least two quarters of physical sciences, at least two in the biological sciences, and at least one in the mathematical sciences.

**Social Sciences (3 quarter-courses):**

Students take at least one sequence of courses: "Power, Identity, and Resistance," "Self, Culture, and Society," "Democracy and Social Science," "Mind," or "Classics of Social and Political Thought."

**Foreign Language:**

Students must demonstrate competency in a foreign language to graduate.

**UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS**

1845 East Northgate Drive  
Irving, Texas 75062  
[www.udallas.edu](http://www.udallas.edu)

The Core curriculum is a specific set of courses, experiences, and texts shared by all students working toward the undergraduate degree at the University of Dallas. Encompassing slightly more than half of the undergraduate credits required for the degree, The Core is designed to engender the pursuit of wisdom, to foster a mature understanding of faith, and to encourage responsible leadership in the twenty-first century. The organiza-

tion and content of The Core are determined by the premise that these goals can best be achieved through a curriculum founded on the Western heritage of liberal education.

**Philosophy:**

Three required courses and a course that relates to the student's major field of study.

**English:**

Four required courses also known as the Literary Tradition sequence.

**Mathematics and Fine Arts:**

Students may choose to present three credits of mathematics and six credits of fine arts, or six credits of mathematics and three credits of fine arts. The following courses fulfill the mathematics requirements:

Euclidean and Non-Euclidean Geometries

Elements of Number Theory

Introduction to Computer Science I

Courses in calculus sequence beginning with Calculus I

The six-hour math option may be fulfilled by taking Introductory Analysis and one of the above courses.

The Fine Arts credits should be drawn from approved Art, Drama, or Music courses.

**Science:**

One laboratory science course in the life sciences and one in the physical sciences.

**Classics and Modern Languages:**

A sliding requirement of three advanced credits to either 12 credits (in Classics) or 14 credits (in Modern Languages).

**American Civilization:**

Two courses taken by students in the freshman year.

**Western Civilization:**

Two courses taken by students in the sophomore year.

**Politics:**

A one-semester course, Principles of American Politics, taken by students in the freshman year.

**Economics:**

A one-semester course taken during the freshman or sophomore year.

**Theology:**

All students must take six credits in religious studies for the undergraduate degree. Ordinarily, this requirement will be satisfied by a course in scripture (Theology 1310) and a course in the Western Theological Tradition (Theology 2311).

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE**

One University Heights

Asheville, North Carolina 28804

[www.unca.edu](http://www.unca.edu)

UNC at Asheville bills itself as North Carolina's public liberal arts program. The University aims to develop students of broad perspective who think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, and participate actively in their communities. All students must complete the general education requirements.

**Art (4 semester hours):**

Students must complete a three-hour interdisciplinary lecture course in the arts (ARTS 310 – Arts and Ideas), plus a one-hour laboratory course in one of the arts areas.

**English Language (3-7 semester hours):**

Students must demonstrate proficiency through the level of LANG 102 – Writing and Critical Thinking.

**Humanities (16 semester hours):**

The Humanities Program is a four-course offering that must be taken sequentially.

HUM 124 – The Ancient World

HUM 214 – The Medieval and Renaissance World

HUM 324 – The Modern World: Mid-17th to Mid-20th Century

HUM 414 – The Individual in the Contemporary World

**Library Research (1 semester hour):**

Students should complete a library research course in the freshman year.

**Mathematics (4 semester hours):**

One course chosen from an approved list:

**Natural Sciences (8 semester hours):**

All students are required to take a sequence of courses consisting of one five-hour course from Astronomy, Atmospheric Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Studies (geology) or Physics; and one three-hour interdisciplinary course selected from an approved list.

**Social Sciences (6 semester hours):**

Courses from an approved list must be chosen from two different disciplines to include Anthropology, Economics, Mass Communication, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, or interdisciplinary courses developed from these. A student must select one course that is not required for his or her major.

**Foreign Language (0-6 semester hours):**

Students must demonstrate competence through the 120 level or above.

**Health and Fitness (2-4 semester hours):**

Students must complete one course from each of the following headings – Health and Wellness and Fitness Development (activity).

UNCA plans to phase in a new integrative liberal arts program in 2004-2005. The new program promotes linkage across the curriculum, and emphasizes skills development.

**UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME**

220 Main Building

Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

[www.nd.edu](http://www.nd.edu)

The First Year of Studies is the college to which all incoming first-year Notre Dame students are admitted. Students are not in a major during the first year; rather, students make a declaration of a tentative intended program. The First Year of Studies program is designed to provide a foundation in liberal education and an opportunity to explore areas of special interest before declaring a major.

**First Year of Studies Curriculum:**

University Seminar (1 semester)

First-Year Composition (1 semester)

Mathematics (2 semesters)

Natural Science (2 semesters)

Physical Education or ROTC (2 semesters)

1 additional university requirement (see below)

3 additional courses (program requirements or electives)

Incorporated into the First Year curriculum are several of the University Requirements that all Notre Dame students must take to graduate.

**University Requirements:**

University Seminar (1 semester)

First-Year Composition (1 course)

Mathematics (2 courses)

Natural Science (2 courses)

History (1 course)

Social Science (1 course)

Philosophy (2 courses)

Theology (2 courses)

Fine Arts or Literature (1 course)

Physical Education or ROTC (2 courses)

The University also offers a Program of Liberal Studies, known as the “Great Books Program,” to students enrolled in the College of Arts and Letters, the largest of Notre Dame’s undergraduate colleges. It is a three-year, prescribed sequence of seminars and specialized courses (tutorials) anchored in the Western and Catholic traditions. Its course of studies leads to the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

**YALE UNIVERSITY**

PO Box 208234

New Haven, Connecticut 06520

[www.yale.edu](http://www.yale.edu)

Although Yale does not require a core curriculum of all students, it does offer what amounts to a core—called Directed Studies—to selected students in the freshmen year. One hundred twenty-five students are accepted each year to this program that offers an interdisciplinary study of Western civilization. Students take three year-long courses—literature, philosophy, and historical and political thought—in which they read the central works of the Western tradition.

## Other Colleges and Universities with a Core Curriculum

Besides those discussed previously, there are other colleges and universities that have a core curriculum or general education requirements that may be valuable to consult.

Asbury College  
Wilmore, KY  
[www.asbury.edu](http://www.asbury.edu)

Claremont McKenna College  
Claremont, GA  
[www.claremontmckenna.edu](http://www.claremontmckenna.edu)

Assumption College  
Worcester, MA  
[www.assumption.edu](http://www.assumption.edu)

Gonzaga University  
Spokane, WA  
[www.gonzaga.edu](http://www.gonzaga.edu)

Auburn University  
Auburn, Alabama  
[www.auburn.edu](http://www.auburn.edu)

Gustavus Adolphus College  
St. Peter, MN  
[www.gustavus.edu](http://www.gustavus.edu)

Calvin College  
Grand Rapids, MI  
[www.calvin.edu](http://www.calvin.edu)

Hampden-Sydney College  
Hampden-Sydney, VA  
[www.hsc.edu](http://www.hsc.edu)

Christendom College  
Front Royal, VA  
[www.christendom.edu](http://www.christendom.edu)

Mary Washington College  
Fredricksburg, VA  
[www.mwc.edu](http://www.mwc.edu)

Millsaps College  
Jackson, MS  
[www.millsaps.edu](http://www.millsaps.edu)

Morehouse College  
Atlanta, GA  
[www.morehouse.edu](http://www.morehouse.edu)

Oglethorpe University  
Atlanta, GA  
[www.oglethorpe.edu](http://www.oglethorpe.edu)

Providence College  
Providence, RI  
[www.providence.edu](http://www.providence.edu)

Rhodes College  
Memphis, TN  
[www.rhodes.edu](http://www.rhodes.edu)

St. Anselm College  
Manchester, NH  
[www.anselm.edu](http://www.anselm.edu)

St. Mary's College of California  
Moraga, CA  
[www.stmarys-ca.edu](http://www.stmarys-ca.edu)

St. Olaf College  
Northfield, MN  
[www.stolaf.edu](http://www.stolaf.edu)

St. Vincent College  
Latrobe, PA  
[www.stvincent.edu](http://www.stvincent.edu)

Thomas More College  
Crestview Hills, KY  
[www.thomasmore.edu](http://www.thomasmore.edu)

Trinity University  
San Antonio, TX  
[www.trinity.edu](http://www.trinity.edu)

University of San Francisco  
San Francisco, CA  
[www.usfca.edu](http://www.usfca.edu)





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